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DE RUEHSM #0231/01 0971645
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 071645Z APR 09
FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4277
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000231

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/07/2018
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SUBJECT: SWEDISH VIEWS ON APRIL GAERC AGENDA

Classified By: A/DCM MARC KOEHLER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: In an April 1 meeting, EU Deputy Correspondent Jonas Wendel discussed the problematic invitation of Pres. Lukashenko to the May 7 Eastern Partnership launch; the EU's policy plans with Israel, Syria and Iran; upcoming (and rescheduled) summits, and Montenegro. Wendel told us he attends nearly all ministerial-level EU meetings with Swedish FM Carl Bildt, and that his information to poloff reflects Bildt's thoughts and plans. End Summary.

Lukashenko and the Eastern Partnership Launch

¶2. (C) Wendel said EU FMs are keenly aware of the "game" Pres. Lukashenko could play surrounding the May 7 launch of the Eastern Partnership (EaP), but the Czechs are unable to get consensus on how to handle the conundrum. Sweden's position remains the same: Lukashenko should not be invited because, Wendel told poloff, Bildt thinks he is "unpredictable." The latest EU plan is a "gentlemen's agreement" with Lukashenko whereby he would be officially invited, but would send a minister to attend in his place. Wendel said that Spanish FM Moratinos visited Belarus on March 23 and reported Lukashenko agreed to not attend the EaP launch if he is invited. Nonetheless, there are fears that Lukashenko might still appear at the EaP, violating the agreement, Wendel said.

¶3. (C) "Everything is playing into Lukashenko's hands," continued Wendel, because the EU must reach out to Belarus to counter Russia's growing influence. If Belarus recognizes Abkhazia and South Ossetia after the May 7 launch, the EU would lack leverage to push back: there are no punitive provisions in the EaP, such as removal of a country from the partnership. Moreover, a disgruntled Georgia might pull out of the EaP, while recognition by Belarus could start a domino effect of recognition. Wendel said a few EU members stated that the "era of ideology and high principles is over"; the EU has a partnership with Russia, and one with Belarus is no different. Still, a human rights dialogue between the EU and Belarus will begin after the EaP, Wendel said.

Association Agreement with Israel

¶4. (C) A large portion of the April GAERC agenda will be devoted to the annual evaluation of all of the EU's action plans with non-EU members. The EU's association agreement with Israel will be the most notable topic of discussion. Wendel said the current EU-Israel association agreement expires April 10 and at the very minimum it will be renewed in its current form. Israel wants to upgrade the agreement, but the work needed to do so likely will not be concluded in the near future. More importantly, Israel must "firmly commit" to the two state solution, said Wendel, for the EU to agree to upgrade the agreement. The EU-Israel Association Council might meet on May 18 to discuss a stronger agreement.

Association Agreement with Syria

15. (C) There is general EU agreement to proceed with an association agreement with Syria, Wendel claimed, but some members want to wait until after the June election in Lebanon. Sweden wants to make Syria feel more included in the EU as a way to get Syria to be more helpful in the Middle East Peace Process, Wendel said. Syria needs to be given a reason to move more toward the West, away from Iran. No country is against the association agreement, Wendel stated, but the British want Syria first to commit to a number of conditions, including the two-state policy. France wants to wait first for the U.S. to announce its Syria policy.

Iran

16. (C) Discussion on Iran was limited at the March Gymnich, but Iran might be discussed further on the margins of the April GAERC by the EU-8 (Britain, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic and Sweden). Wendel said no EU member is categorically opposed to autonomous sanctions, but FM Bildt believes that this step should be the last option. Bildt first wants to fully exhaust the UN track, especially as Russia appears to be more cooperative. Wendel cited the example of the Russians not delivering the S-300 missiles to Iran. Sweden also hopes the Iranians will be invited to the June conference on Afghanistan that Italy is planning to host as the current G-8 leader.

Montenegro's Accession

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17. (C) FM Bildt is "very concerned" that Montenegro's application has been politicized, said Wendel. Germany continues to delay processing Montenegro's membership application though it has agreed to give the application to the Commission if the Commission holds it until 2011. Montenegro is currently on the agenda for the April GAERC, but might again be removed, Wendel said.

Burma

18. (C) Burma sanctions will be renewed in April and the visa ban list might be updated. An official statement might be made against the regime, Wendel reported.

EU Summits and Troikas

19. (C) The 11th EU-China summit that was postponed under the French Presidency is set for May 20; there will be a second EU-China summit on November 30 (tentative date) in Stockholm, Wendel reported. It is possible other summits lacking firm dates will be pushed to Sweden's presidency, he continued, including the summits with Pakistan and South Korea (pending the likely passage of a Free Trade Agreement). The Swedes are preparing to host these summits if necessary. Sweden will organize a meeting between the EU Troika and the Central Asians in November, and will organize some seminars on Central Asia in Brussels surrounding the troika.
SILVERMAN